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BOOK REVIEWS

SOME NEW BOOKS ON EDUCATION

Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States.

By B. A. HINSDALE. Charles Scribner's Sons.

DR. HINSDALE has not only written a vivid and most readable biography of a very interesting person; he has also presented in the clearest light just what were the services of Horace Mann to the common school cause. The method of treatment is not chronological, but incidental; that is to say, he has not undertaken to show what Mann did month by month, but has selected the significant incidents in his career, and made much of them. It may be, as the author himself admits, that something is thus lost of continuity, but the gain in clearness more than compensates such a possible loss; at any rate, after finishing the book one is not inclined to quarrel with the author's method, but rather to compliment him on the admirable results.

The book opens with an account of the development of the common schools down to the time of Horace Mann, followed by a chapter on the men and movements that immediately prepared the way for his ministry. For Mann's career as an educator was, from beginning to end, a ministry of toil, sacrifice, even of suffering. His was the call to the vocation of the martyr. This fact, and the spirit in which he performed his work, are strongly and appropriately emphasized by Dr. Hinsdale. This is the inspiring feature of the book.

That Horace Mann was great as an agitator and organizer in the educational field, and that his knowledge of the science of education was as limited as his interest in the same was scanty, may be news to many. It is not so long ago—no longer than Horace Mann's time at least—that anyone was esteemed worthy of almost any place in the teaching profession, with no special training at all, not infrequently with very scanty education or "learning." There need be little wonder, therefore, that the teacher or educator is now rather generally regarded as a man—or maid—of all work, little recognition being as yet given to

the fact that education is, perhaps, the broadest of all human interests—preëminently the field for specialization. Horace Mann was a specialist in a field in which the practical teacher has often failed. The nature and character of his service come out strongly in these pages. To make the distinction clearer, Dr. Hinsdale frequently uses the word “pedagogist” as a something Horace Mann was not. Few of us would fail to be duly grateful for not being called such a thing as that. May the word have a short life and a merry one!

How very little there is new under the sun after all! Many of the questions Horace Mann had to meet are burning questions today—especially modern are the matters of women teachers (p. 175), whom Mann favored; the religious controversy (p. 214 *seq.*), which is in its essentials now on again in Indiana; the public supervision of private schools (p. 297); and the real foundation upon which common schools rest (p. 177), a question which Mann seems to have treated for all time.

There is opportunity for some to differ with the author on his use of the word “revival,” as applied to the increased interest in common schools. Just what there had ever been to revive is not quite easy to see. Dr. Hinsdale seems to show quite clearly that there were no common schools of any account, generally speaking, up to about the time of Mann’s appearance on the stage, with the exception of the early efforts of the Puritans. These Puritan schools were, after all, not exactly prototypes of the schools Mann labored for. There was, in his day, a great awakening to school needs, from which dates the public school system that we know and honor. Perhaps it is legitimate to find the beginnings of this liveliness in Puritan laws; but the beginning was very small and very remote, quite incommensurable with the movement.

On the whole, few books, if any, that have appeared in our country of recent years can be read with more interest and permanent profit than Dr. Hinsdale’s judicious yet enthusiastic sketch of the life and achievements of the great American educational statesman of the first half of our century.

English National Education. By H. HOLMAN. London: Blackie & Son.

As a sketch of the rise of public elementary schools in England this work of Professor Holman’s is a helpful addition to our knowledge